

Tale Spinner

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The glass came down in one motion, splattering the eight-legged creature beneath its bottom. Two of its legs twitched frantically as it fought hopelessly against its approaching death. Night was falling and the seaport's tavern was beginning to empty.

“What did you do that for?” a young cherubic faced man asked him. The alcohol in his cheeks caused them to glow scarlet. “Spiders are our friends.”

The holder of the glass picked it up and looked at the bottom. The old man was satisfied that the deed had been done. He looked over at the man-child and scowled. “How long have you been in these waters, boy?”

“A year now. Did a stint on the Carthia and the Vulture.”

“A year?” Kelvin said incredulously. “Only a year? Little man, spiders are bloodseekers and you are naïve to their treachery.”

And so Kelvin, who was old and blind in one eye, told the youth of his tale...

Kelvin was twenty-three years old and had traveled on four long haul stints on the Defiant. His muscular and broad body gave him an aura of power but it did not make him uncommon aboard the ship. Many of the crew held the same strength and power. Long brown hair was pulled up off his shoulders and blended into the dark tan skin. Vinta, a fellow sailor and friend, stood on his left. Both men leaned against the railing as they watched the gentle waves lap against the sides of the ship.

The Defiant was joined on this trip by the Vengeful. Both warships carried a hundred men apiece. Each member of their crew was a seasoned warrior as well as a competent sailor. Three weeks had past since they had left port in Jarimathia and the crews were keen for a fight and to pillage.

The Captain of the Defiant held no illusion that he was a pirate since he had been given free reign by the King of Sarmouth to pillage the waters around his domain. The Captain believed he was a knight whose horse just happened to be wooden and floated upon the water. Kelvin knew that the Captain desired to be a hero of the legends. So when the tall black ship appeared on the horizon, there was no doubt in the captain's mind that it could only be a representative of evil. The Captain ordered them to attack and the ships turned their rudders and sails intercept the unknown vessel.

The black ship was unlike any ship Kelvin had ever seen. Shaped like a catamaran, two booms were thrust out in front of the main body. Three masts graced upward into the air, but no sails were visible at first. As the two warships changed their course to engage the vessel, the sails slowly became visible. They began to glint and gleam in the sunlight as if they were reflecting the moisture of the morning.

"Never seen anything like her," Vinta stated gruffly. "She's not from Rayla or Beufin." Both were cities on the farthest edges of the known territories.

The black ship was closing in now. It seemed to change direction, coming towards the two ships. The Vengeful flagged the Defiant that it would stand back, allowing the Defiant to lead the assault.

Kelvin squinted. "What are those things hanging from the sides?"

“Look like bags of ballast,” Vinta replied. “Weird looking.” The call to arms went up behind them and both men drew their swords. Men up and down the railing gripped grappling irons, readying themselves to throw their lines to entrap the approaching ship.

Kelvin felt the anticipation rising within him. He was calm until the white bags came close enough to identify them. They weren't bags of ballast, they were human bodies wrapped in white gauze. Their gleaming white skulls glared outward from within the wrappings, mocking the men in the other ship. All up and down the railing, the realization struck the men. Shouts went up to the captain as the black ship drew closer. The captain yelled to change course but the ships grew closer together. The crew tried desperately to change direction.

Kelvin looked back at the captain, seeing uncertainty on the usual stoic face. The sound of something striking the Defiant made him quickly turn around. From the sides of the black ship came shooting out a liquid from hidden nipples. The liquid struck the side of the ship and it instantaneously hardened. A cry of alarm went up from those closest and the sailors began to strike at the lines from the black ship. Kelvin sliced at one of the lines, finding it resistant to his blade.

A peculiar clicking sound caught Kelvin's attention. He looked up and saw the attacker's faces. They streamed up from under the deck of the black ship, dancing across the lines to jump atop the unwitting sailors. Their heads and torsos were humanoid but their legs were that of a spider. Eight legs were clustered around a swollen abdomen and nothing but three claws for hands. Long fangs destroyed their humanlike visage. Their skin was blue gray in color.

Panic ensued. Screams of horror and utter terror captured the hearts of the sailors. Kelvin turned and climbed to an upper deck, watching as Vinta was dragged down behind him. The spider creatures fell upon the sailors, biting at their bodies repeatedly. One of the spider creatures was cleaved in two by a massive sword swing, but the defender was quickly born under. Kelvin turned to look for the Vengeful, but found that they had increased their distance and were rapidly retreating. His heart fell at being abandoned as he heard the clicking sounds behind him. Thrusting as he turned, he

spearred one of the creatures through the chest as it climbed over the railing. As it kicked its death throes, another climbed up and over its impaled brethren. Kelvin was unable to withdraw his blade in time as he felt the weight of this new aggressor drag him down onto the deck. He felt a sharp pain as the creature's fangs bit into his shoulder. Kelvin cried out as numbness spread throughout his chest and sent him spinning into the blackness of unconsciousness.

Kelvin awoke to the sounds of animalistic grunting. A high-pitched squealing overwhelmed his ears. Slowly opening his eyes, he saw before him Vinta and a monstrosity coupling. His friend was naked from the waist down, lying on a couch like chair that fully cupped his body. His wrists and ankles were covered in some form of resin that merged with the chair. Atop him sat what looked to be a half-woman/half-spider. The eight legs writhed around Vinta's body as she raised and lowered herself against him. Kelvin could see Vinta's erect manhood through the translucent abdomen of the creature. The spider woman's scream became louder and suddenly Vinta also cried out with pleasure. Kelvin watched as the man's semen was milked from his body. She leaned forward, her bluish breasts rubbing against the man's chest. She opened her mouth, revealing long white fangs that descended from within her upper skull. Biting down on his neck, Vinta gasped aloud repeatedly and his body writhed against the restraints. His eyes fluttered back into his head and his face turned gray.

Moments passed as Kelvin watched his friend be drained of blood. After an interminable amount of time, Vinta's body writhed in seizure once more and then lay pitifully still. His chest rose no more with breath. Kelvin sobbed in horror, realizing he was trapped in a similar fashion. The spider woman rose off of the corpse and turned to face him. She moved with an exquisite grace and eloquence that only spiders have.

Except for the bulbous abdomen and sticklike legs, she was very beautiful. As she straddled him, her perfect hands cupped his face, turning his head to expose his neck. She looked him over, poking and prodding his skin. "Your kind is so luscious and filling." Her lilting voice disturbed him. The sounds that came from her lips were wispy

and filled with breath. “Your kind disappeared from our lands long ago. Your kind is legendary.”

His mind found its voice amid the horror. “What are you?”

“We are Gith-Salma. I am Licla, Sovereign Mother. We found that we are,” she paused as if unsure of the word she wanted to use. “Limited in our means of survival. Your kind kills us on sight. Infiltration is our specialty, so we are becoming like you to survive in your lands. We become more and more like you with each new breeding. We are becoming better than you.” She leaned down against him, filling his vision with her beautiful face and breasts. Her cold skin warmed quickly to his. “I am the eighth generation since we’ve begun propagation with your kind. Increasingly we are adapting to your ways and to your bodies. We are a silent invasion.” As she spoke, her wetness gyrated against his nakedness. Even in his horror, he found himself entranced by her eyes and beauty. Against his will, he felt his arousal. She kissed his lips, nipping at his neck. Kelvin felt his genitals enter her and he surrendered himself to the pleasure she provided.

Kelvin stirred in the coldness of the air. In the distance he could hear a faint moaning. His neck ached but in the faint light he could see nothing but vague shapes. Flexing his fingers, he felt their restraints give way. Blinking away a dry dust from his eyes, Kelvin lifted his head to see that he was wrapped in the same white gauze as the bodies he had seen hanging from the sides of the black ship. He had been stacked for storage just like an insignificant arachnid did to its victims. Kelvin shivered and slowly worked his way out of his bonds.

The webbing came away slowly and methodically. During that time, Kelvin faked sleep twice as the eight-legged fiends dragged other cocooned bodies into the hold.

Breeding. He had been forced to copulate with one of them. Shuddering with horror and disgust, he wriggled out of the last of the wrappings and stood up. All around him were dozens of other cocoons, stacked one on top of another. Some of their faces

were desiccated and dry. Those he guessed had already been drained to the point of death. He reached out to touch it and the face crumbled under his touch.

Hearing a giggling child, he spun around looking for the source of the sound. He realized that he was naked from the waist down. Crouching to hide himself, he watched as a child toddled towards him. Taken aback for a moment, his revulsion nearly overwhelmed him when he came to realize that this was not a child but a spider hybrid. It had two arms and legs, but its skin was blue and it was covered in fine hair. Most disturbing of all was its eyes. They glimmered with an unholy blue light. Fresh red blood trickled out of its mouth.

He tore his eyes off the child, seeing a vast array of egg-like pods in the next hold. All of them held a child like this one, some were playing outside the egg, and others were still growing within them.

The child continued to stare as Kelvin walked slowly away.

The ship shifted slowly with the waves. Kelvin pressed against the wall, hiding in a small depression as another of the warrior spiders stalked past. His eyes hurt from squinting in the ever-present darkness. He pulled off his shirt, preparing what he hoped would give him some light. He was now completely naked. The walls of the ship were not made of wood, but of the same type of resin that his restraints had been made of. It was hard, durable and virtually unbreakable. He opened up the small wooden box he had found amid one of the corpses. It contained flint and steel, like he had hoped.

He noticed that these creatures had no fire. He guessed they saw dark, and he could find no external light sources. Maybe, he hoped, they would fear fire like other animals did. It was likely they had never seen it before. Slowly and with great deliberation, he tore his befouled shirt into strips and wrapped them around a femur bone that he had taken from a desiccated victim. He struck the flint on the bit of steel, watching the sparks spray from it.

Nothing. In inspiration, he reached up from the cubby and tore a piece of the webbing off the nearest cocoon. The corpse moved, moaning. Kelvin paused, unsure of

what to do. There was nothing he could do for the others. He had discovered that their bonds were much more secure than his had been. He attributed his escape to the fact that with each successive breeding, the spider-like attributes of the Gith-Salma were fading in strength.

He struck the steel again and watched as the sparks struck the webbing. Much to his surprise, the webbing ignited immediately and burst into an intense flame. So much so that he had to leave the cubbyhole. Within moments, the entire wall was in flames. In shock, Kelvin suddenly realized that the entire ship was extremely flammable. Black smoke began to fill the hold, billowing out all around him. The fire was quickly spreading. Sensing movement, Kelvin scooped up the femur from amid the flames and waved it all around him. A high-pitched squealing joined the sound of the flames. He struck out blindly as he began to run. He didn't know where he was going, but he knew that if he didn't escape, he could at least take the black ship down with him. He dragged the flaming femur across the cocoons, bringing a quick death to those that remained trapped in their drugged stupors.

Kelvin smashed into one of the creatures in the smoke, feeling a claw strike his face and chest. Naked, he had no protection other than the bone in his hand. Blood sprayed and he lost the sight in one eye. Pain imprisoned him for a brief moment and then he continued his flight. Up and up he went because in a ship, the only way out is up. Their screams echoed upward to him, both of the dying Gith-Salma and his trapped shipmates.

Kelvin followed the smoke as it rose.

He stumbled out onto the glistening deck of the black ship, seeing stars and the shimmering half moon. Knowing a death at sea was preferable than dying at the hands of these creatures, Kelvin threw himself over the edge and out into the cool air.

Kelvin did not remember striking the water.

“So what did you do then?” his companion asked.

“The Vengeful found me. They had been trailing the black ship on the horizon. When the black ship burned, they saw its flames. They said it burned for a day before their captain decided to approach. They found me floating on my back, sunburned and sporting a nasty gash that took out my eye. I had been inside that ship for three weeks.” Kelvin rubbed the scar. “We watched the ship smoke for a week before we decided to leave. No one wanted to approach it, so we returned to port. That was forty-three years ago.”

The bar was empty and quiet. Late night had come and the bartender was nowhere to be seen.

“So you were the one,” the cherubic faced man-child stated flatly.

“What?” Kelvin asked drunkenly.

“You were the one who fired the first ship.” The boy smiled, showing the fangs that Kelvin knew all too well. The boy’s eyes sparkled blue. “Infiltration is our specialty, remember?”

The End